



TEAL News

Winter 2019
www.bctéal.org

THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Pushing the Boundaries



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Editor Scott Douglas
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Layout Editor Shawna Williams

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Pushing Boundaries

WELCOME to another edition of BC TEAL's newsletter! It's always an inbox highlight when I receive the newsletter because I can take time to appreciate the scope, variety, and expertise of our members as I read through the articles.

The fall seems to have flown by with several events. I had a wonderful time at the Tears to Smiles event and the Lower Mainland Conference. Great speakers, engaging sessions, and all so well organized. Thank you to all the BC TEAL members who do so much to keep us informed, motivated, and engaged.

As we are approaching the end of another year, I hope that you will consider if 2020 is going to be the year for you to become involved in your professional organization. There will be several opportunities to join the board or various committees. Watch for information on upcoming positions in February and consider putting your name or the name of a colleague forward.

Enjoy celebrating the winter season with your own special traditions.

Cheers from Vietnam!
Karen



Dr. Karen Densky has taught EAL for over 20 years at the post-secondary level. She has taught in Greenland, Chile, Vietnam, and Mexico. She is a teacher educator in and coordinator of the TESOL program at Thompson Rivers University, where she also teaches in the EAP and MEd programs. She has been an active member of BC TEAL for over 20 years.

AS TEACHERS, there can seem to be so many dividing lines in our lives. Everywhere, there are delimitations between teachers and students, faculty and administration, novices and experts, and practitioners and researchers. However, transformative experiences can take place in the space between these dichotomies. Teachers learn from students, faculty become educational leaders, novices bring new insights to experts, and practitioners create and disseminate knowledge. When the boundaries that limit potential are pushed, English as an additional language teaching and learning benefits.

BC TEAL provides a home for everyone who is involved in teaching English as an additional language who is looking to live in the space between dichotomies. This issue of TEAL News focuses on how boundaries can be pushed, with articles on the upcoming Image Conference, people in the field, professional development opportunities, teaching and learning in Chile and Canada, the needs of EAL writing centre tutors, the lower mainland conference, a book, and an additional language learning journey. The articles in this issue of TEAL News exemplify pushing boundaries as part of continuous professional development and growth.

Scott Roy Douglas
Editor, *BC TEAL News*



Scott Roy Douglas is an associate professor in the University of British Columbia's Okanagan School of Education. His focus is on English as an additional language teaching and learning. He is the chair of BC TEAL Publications, and the editor of the BC TEAL Journal.

BC TEAL Upcoming Events

BC TEAL 2020
& Image
Conference!
April 23-25
Douglas College
www.bcteal.org

bcteal.org/events

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BC TEAL 2020 Annual Conference and The Image Conference

Start: Thursday April 23, 2020
End: Saturday April 25, 2020
Location: Douglas College, New Westminster, BC

BC TEAL is honoured to host its annual conference along with The Image Conference (theimageconference.org) at Douglas College's New Westminster campus. We will explore the theme of **20/20 Vision**. Participate in this opportunity to enhance your perspective and practice. Keep an eye on the BC TEAL website for more details: bcteal.org.

The Image Conference is the only conference in the world exclusively focused on the use of image in English language teaching. The two key aims of the conference are to put media and images at the centre of the language learning agenda, and to offer guidance on using media and images critically and creatively in language teaching in the age of the internet. Learn more about the Image Conference by reviewing previous conference programs: [Brussels](#), [Malta](#), and [Lisbon](#).

Call for Proposals: BC TEAL & The Image Conference

The Call for Proposals for BC TEAL's 2020 Annual Conference is now open. Options include 45-minute presentations, 45-minute workshops, 45-minute panel presentations, 90-minute poster sessions, and more. Please submit using the online submission form: tinyurl.com/bcteal2020. The Call for Papers for the Image Conference is also open. Options include 45-minute talks or 45-minute workshops. Submit via the online submission form: tinyurl.com/Image2020.

Plenary Speakers



Sylvia Karastathi is an adjunct lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting, Ionian University and the academic director at the Department of English Language and Language Teaching at New York College, Athens, Greece. She holds a PhD in contemporary literature and visual culture from the University of Cambridge, UK, and an MA in Modern Literature and Culture from the University of York, UK, and a DELTA. She has previously published in the field of word and image studies in *The Museal Turn* (2012) and *The Handbook of Intermediality* (2015). Her research interests include museum education, and visual literacy in language education.



Kieran Donaghy is an award-winning writer, international conference speaker, and teacher trainer. He is the author of books for students and teachers of English as a foreign language. His publications include *Film in Action* (Delta Publishing), *Writing Activities for Film and Video* (ELT Teacher2Writer), and *The Image in ELT* (ELT Council). His website Film English (film-english.com) has won a British Council ELTons award and an English Speaking Union award. He trains teachers at The School for Training, his specialist teacher training institute in Barcelona. Kieran is the founder of The Image Conference and co-founder of the Visual Arts Circle.



David Harrison is an anthropologist and linguist who has been a National Geographic Fellow and co-director of the Society's Enduring Voices Project, documenting endangered languages and cultures around the world. He has done extensive fieldwork with Indigenous communities from Siberia and Mongolia to Peru, India, and Australia. His global research is the subject of the acclaimed documentary film *The Linguists*, and his work has been featured in numerous publications including *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Science*. David is both a professor of linguistics and associate provost for academic programs at Swarthmore College.

The Image Conference

by Kieran Donaghy

THE IMAGE CONFERENCE, the annual conference of The School for Training, is an innovative and collaborative project which seeks to explore the possibilities which film, video, images, and video games offer to both language teachers and language learners. The primary aim of The Image Conference is to put images at the centre of the language learning agenda and offer guidance on using images critically and creatively in language teaching in the age of the Internet. The Image Conference brings together leading experts and practitioners in the use of images in language learning to share their experiences, insights, and know-how. The conference also provides participants with an excellent opportunity to enhance their competence in the innovative and creative use of images. The conference is held in a different city every year. So far it has been held in Barcelona, Spain; Brasilia, Brazil; Córdoba, Spain; Munich, Germany; Valletta, Malta; Lisbon, Portugal; Athens, Greece; and Brussels, Belgium.

The Image Conference can be summed up in three words: innovative, practical, and effective.

Innovative

The Image Conference is the first conference dedicated solely to the innovative and creative use of images in English language teaching. A recurring theme throughout all of the editions of the conference has been the highlighting of the educational benefits of not just using media and images inside and outside the classroom, but also of creating media and images. Many speakers, such as Antonia Clare, Ceri Jones, Sylvia Karastathi, Lindsay Clandfield, Ben Goldstein, Graham Stanley, and Paul Driver, have looked at innovative ways of integrating images into the school system and have suggested ways teachers could develop to become successful 21st century educators.

Practical

The Image Conference is a highly practical and adaptable project. The practicality and adaptability of the project is reflected in the fact that The Image Conference has been held

very successfully, and with excellent feedback, from both speakers and delegates in eight very different contexts. We are sure the 9th edition of the conference in Vancouver will receive similar positive feedback. The organisers are already in negotiations with teaching associations worldwide about holding the conference in their cities in the near future.

20/20 Vision
BC TEAL Annual Conference
The Image Conference
April 23-25, 2020
Douglas College

Keynote Speakers

Kieran Donaghy	The School for Training, Barcelona Visual Arts Circle
Sylvia Karastathi	Ionian University, Greece New York College, Athens
K. David Harrison	Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania National Geographic Fellow

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theimageconference.org
#bctéalimage2020

The image DOUGLAS LAS CONFERENCE
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 New Westminster, BC
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Effective

Another dominant theme through the eight editions of the Image Conferences so far has been the many educational benefits of using images in language teaching. Many speakers have highlighted how effective the use of different types of images is in promoting creativity, critical thinking, empathy, and collaborative learning. The best way to underline the effectiveness of The Image Conference is to listen to what delegates have to say:

The Image Conference has provided a new perspective which challenges the well-established vision of the praxis of ELT through a methodologies and approaches view. It is only by changing the way we look at things that we will be able to bring innovative and creative practice to our field. I think this is the richest way in which the Image Conference has contributed to my work as a professional.

—Valéria França,

Head of the Edify Institute, Brazil

Great sessions, great admin work, great venue, and very fair conference fee. I've been to dozens of conferences over the past ten years and this was the best.

—Brendan Wightman,

Head of Digital Publishing ELT,
Cambridge University Press



Kieran Donaghy is an award-winning writer, international conference speaker, and teacher trainer. His publications include *Film in Action*, *How to Write Film and Video Activities*, and *The Image in ELT*. His website film-english.com won a British Council ELTons award and an English Speaking Union award. He trains teachers at The School for Training in Barcelona. Kieran founded The Image Conference.

Pushing Boundaries: Notes from the Field

by Cindi Jones



Photo by luis_molinero from freepik.com

AS ENGLISH as an additional language (EAL) teachers, we ask our students to try things they are not comfortable with to push their boundaries. Which begs the question, are we modeling risk taking in our own lives? What have we done to push our boundaries? And how can we help our colleagues as they are learning and growing? To answer these questions, I reached out to the community of EAL professionals. I spoke to people from a variety of backgrounds and different perspectives. A big thank you to everyone who took the time to talk to me and a special thank you to:

- Andrea Heald, MEd; Instructional Specialist and Instructor
- Cari-Ann Roberts Gotta, Academic Upgrading & Development Instructor and Program Coordinator, Selkirk College
- Paul Duke, Instructor and Online Educator
teacherpaulsclassroom.com
- Joy Singh, Instructor and IELTS Expert
destinationenglish.org

What does it mean to push boundaries?

Let's start with a definition of what we mean by pushing boundaries. It includes doing something that we are not comfortable with and reconsidering our expectations of ourselves and of others or doing something "out of our comfort zone." Whatever language is used to describe the boundary, it has to do with fear. We recognize this type of fear in the student who is mysteriously absent for every presentation, or who refuses to answer questions in front of the class. But, do we recognize it in ourselves when it comes to doing something creative? Or when we are faced with a task that requires doing math or using a new program? Or any of the other challenges that we avoid or dread?

As Andrea pointed out, "Fear is a boundary that has to be negotiated on a daily and personal basis." It is that fear that makes us uncomfortable and overcoming the fear that can lead to growth. Our students face this every time they produce work, fail, and grow. The consensus among those I spoke to was that whether the boundary is physical, professional, social, pedagogical, or psychological, pushing boundaries is necessary for growth, innovation, development, and can be a demonstration of leadership.

How have you pushed boundaries?

The EAL professionals I spoke to are constantly pushing their limits and always trying to grow. Some of these changes are self-directed as in the case of Cari-Ann who moved from EAL to Adult Basic Education (ABE) by demonstrating how her skills from EAL teaching were transferable to ABE, and how her experience in EAL was of significant value to ABE students, many of whom are also EAL.

Also demonstrating a self-directed change, Andrea recently earned her MEd, while continuing to work, and has been pushing boundaries by exploring her potential as an academic and a teacher. She did this by following in the footsteps of her mentors and welcoming creative criticism from those more experienced. She found that the journey was not as scary as imagined with the guidance of mentors who had gone before.

Those who had been successful in their own journeys.

For Paul pushing boundaries this year has been moving from teaching full-time to part-time so he can develop a series of EAL videos. These videos have a growing audience and a

Continued on next page
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Pushing Boundaries: Notes from the Field *continued*

dedicated group of volunteer assistants and actors. In addition to pushing him to learn new skills, Paul sees this as a leadership opportunity: "If teachers can imagine themselves into being a filmmaker ... students can similarly imagine themselves into being an actor."

For others the impetus for growth is top down when a program is reorganized or shut down. Joy found herself in this situation when, after 15 years at the same school, it closed its doors unexpectedly. She found herself pounding the pavement for subbing opportunities and cultivating a variety of sources for work. She now works in multiple great environments and has developed increased resiliency.

I also spoke to instructors and leaders in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs who have seen top down change implemented through shuffling of roles and reorganizing. This has led to uncertainty and sometimes necessitated stepping into new and unfamiliar work environments. Roles that require a different skill set and working with people from other sectors of the work force.

What was the most important factor in you being able to push those boundaries?

In order to push boundaries many people cited the necessity of support from family, mentors, and colleagues. As with Andrea's journey, mentors show the way and prove it is possible to reach the goal.

Also, as one might expect from teachers, the importance of learning was stressed. Training from the organization when one is moved into a new position helped with the skills needed for that position and with learning about the new workplace culture.

We take courses, online and in classrooms, watch webinars, listen to pod casts, and we read. We read a lot! We value

education and use it to equip ourselves for the changes necessary when venturing into new territory. And, we are not shy about sharing our newfound knowledge with our peers.

The most difficult aspect of change is the psychological barriers. Boundaries are mental constructs. They exist in our minds and our perceptions. They require courage to overcome. For this the support of likeminded colleagues, friends, and family can be invaluable for their ability to keep you on track and help you find your way through and over barriers.

Your allies can also help you identify the frame you are using to categorize a situation and help you find a new way to look at it. We know this when we are talking to students who won't speak in class. We help them reframe mistakes. When students try and make mistakes, we help them see this as the path to learning rather than failure.

Sometimes having an ally look at a situation which we are framing as a huge problem, will give us the objectivity to reframe the situation as an opportunity, an opportunity to learn new skills and grow, and the ability to see our growth rather than beat ourselves up for not being perfect.

My big take away from these conversations is that we as an EAL community have the skills and the expertise to help colleagues who ask for our assistance to push beyond any boundary they might be up against. And, if we ask for help, we are in a community that will offer their support.



Cindi Jones is the treasurer of BC TEAL. She has been an Academic Director for the past eight years and an instructor for fifteen years before that. She is passionate about helping EAL instructors flourish in their profession.

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GRADUATE
STUDIES



Continued on next page

Edu(va)cation: Hunting for Boundaries at the Birthplace of English Language Education

by Karin Wiebe

*Please don't use the blue sticky gum to stick anything to the walls.
Do you know why? Because Exeter College is 700 years old,
and when you pull the gum off, the building will collapse.
—Adrian Underhill, Principal Tutor*

I ATTENDED the Oxford University English Language Teachers' Summer Seminar (ELTSS) in August 2019. For two weeks students live the Oxford University experience, navigate new geographies and friendships and study the practice of teaching English as an additional language (EAL). There were 69 students in this year's cohort, coming from countries as diverse as the UAE, India, Bangladesh, Russia, China, Macau, Japan, Inner Mongolia, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Peru, Chile and Mexico. My studies in sociolinguistics did nothing to prepare me for so many kinds of English. It was exciting and fascinating! Cultural barriers you would expect from so many strangers could be overcome almost at once. We had the same passion for teaching and enthusiasm for learning. It was 68 instant friends with no Facebook required.

Living in residence at Exeter College is a uniquely amazing experience. The buildings and grounds are well maintained and I'm guessing unchanged for...centuries. The surrounding stone walls remind you that bloody intersections of knowledge, religion, and politics were once very real boundaries. I watched

the moon passing between battlements every night until I fell asleep. Art and displays in each space evidenced untold generations of scholars, philosophers, theologians, scientists, writers and artists. Fast company for an EAL teacher from British Columbia, but it fully inspired me to study and learn as much as possible.

Classes are held in intimate, apartment-like spaces that hold approximately 12 people. On Monday morning, Jon Hird explained at the opening of *Words, Clauses, Sentences, and Beyond* that the English language only became a serious topic of orthographic study when Exeter College (along with the colleges of Cambridge University) was commissioned to write the King James Bible. It was here, in these walls, that scholars first studied the English language.

Hird's lectures explored grammar at the word, clause, sentence, and text level. He offered a different perspective on grammar education that encouraged learners to find, manipulate, and practice patterns in engaging ways. His class was discussion-based with ample opportunity to practice adapting and exploiting texts, ask questions, and make connections to our unique classroom situations.

"Oh for the love of God, they're waving."

Adrian Underhill halts his lecture and our small cohort of 12 students turns to find the ground-floor window is filled with tourist faces, all smiling, pointing, and waving. As if a maestro has cued, cameras appear, and we are all immortalized with disbelief on our faces.

Underhill drew on humanist philosophy and expert language teaching practices to argue in favour of connected, personal educator/student relationships that foster deeper learning. In his week-long series of classes, *Affect and the Whole Person in ELT*, he explained that the work of educators begins with self improvement in three qualities—empathy, unconditional positive regard, and the abandonment of role playing as the "perfect teacher." He drew from the work of Carl Rogers, explaining that "an awareness that we are unfinished allows us to fall into situations of education," and Underhill wanted us to continue being students as well as educators.

Underhill connected an educator's emotional literacy with a student's ability to learn deeply and retain meaningful skills. He introduced Mary Helen Immordino-Yang's work on emotion, self-awareness, and education and explained that "you can't remember something you have no emotion about." His lectures



Exeter Courtyard

Continued on next page

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introduced us to language education theorists, philosophers, and authors like Earl Stevick, Jim Scrivener, and Paulo Friere. Each day, Underhill encouraged us to situate ourselves as teachers in new ways and to determine new paths of connection with our learners.

Tuesday's keynote address is underground, in the Saskatchewan Lecture theatre. I'm puzzling through how that name could possibly have become attached to this space when Anatoly sits next to me. He is wearing a thick wool sweater over a long-sleeve shirt, long pants, and a hat. He speaks with a Russian accent and asks if I'm cold in front of the air conditioner vent. I realize we are sitting alone in the front row, everyone else is at least two rows back. I tell him "Canadians love the cold," which he accepts. Each morning a different member of the Russian cohort keeps me company at the front row.

John Hughes explained that "our goal is to get students where they don't need us anymore." His keynote lecture asked us to consider that language learners can use the creative tools we give them to actively learn a language beyond the classroom. Hughes underscored the 2019 Seminar theme which placed learners at the centre of decision making in adult language education, explaining "we need to encourage them to approach new texts by asking questions and analyzing their personal perspectives." He asked us to develop learner autonomy. Let students discover the rules, don't just give it to them."

Hughes argued for classroom practices that activate a higher order language acquisition. For example, "we usually just check for comprehension, removing the answer and asking a question which leads to 'I don't know!'" Hughes explained that a higher order comprehension comes when students are asked to underline words which show the writer's opinion and ask questions like "Do I agree with the conclusion of the text (and) what evidence does the author use to support the text?"

This morning's fire drill was announced twice yesterday, but there is still chaos and resistance to resident participation. Only half the students come to the chapel for roll call at 7:00 am and one woman from Chile has fallen in the pews and fractured her ankle. Everyone appears in the Great Hall for breakfast an hour later which makes me think if the fire drill had advertised croissants, coffee, and fresh berries it would have been better attended.

The first day in *Imaginative Teaching in the Creative Classroom*, Hanna Kryszewska was interested in classroom psychology, specifically group formation. She explained that it's the educator's responsibility to ensure students feel connected and cooperative with each other. Through the week she introduced an array of controlled and improvisational activities designed to engage the theory of multiple intelligences. Kryszewska's lectures addressed the theory and experiences behind each activity she presented. Her buffet of visuals, objects, ideas, and potential resources were a treasure chest I

couldn't wait to bring home to Canada. Interestingly, this was not a uniform opinion of all students. Some class members appeared confused and even aghast at the presence of poetry, music, and improvisational theatre in language learning.

"Are you teaching listening, or are you using listening to teach language?"—Sinead Laffan

Sinead Laffan showed a 2016 video clip of brothers Gary and Paul O'Donovan who had just won an Olympic gold medal. Not a single person in the class understood the men's interview except Laffan, who hails from the same part of Ireland. She used the clip to remind us what our learners are actually hearing in class, and in the coming days, explored the skill of listening using terminology and ideas uniquely "Laffan" like "match the mush" for decoding word boundaries and "the greenhouse, the garden and the jungle" as a visual concept for separating speech into teachable categories. Her lectures and perspectives were anchored with a week-long progression of listening skills development that focused on real texts.



From left Hania Kryszewska, Sinead Laffan, Karin Wiebe, Dr. Charles Boyle, and Edmund Dudley

I sat at a long wood table surrounded by fellow students and faculty in the Dining Hall and waited for Professor Dumbledore to appear. He didn't show, but another delicious meal was served, and we all chatted and laughed. I felt safe and welcome at Exeter College, inspired by its considerable past and informed by the people who were present. No sorting hat, but you know that was just a fantasy. Instead, I snapped a picture of JRR Tolkien's head where it sits behind the chapel door. Bronze, of course. A hobbit told me where to look.



Karin Wiebe recently completed her BA in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus. She is pursuing research on Canadian immigration in second and third tier communities, specifically intersections of language and employment. She currently works as a part-time instructor with LINC in Kelowna.

Pushing Boundaries: From Chile to Canada

by Claudia Marroquin Pinto



Waving flag of Chile and Canada by Aleksandar Mijatovic



Photo by ernestoelava from Pixabay

AS TEACHERS, we try to push boundaries every day in our classrooms by taking a step out of our comfort zones, questioning the way we have been working for years, or travelling out of our home countries to look for answers and ways to improve our practice. It seems like a kind of “revolutionary concept” these days when there is a framework to follow and a protocol for almost everything teachers have to do. Sometimes, when the system pushes back, it is necessary to find a way to push forward.

I have been working as a teacher in Chile for 15 years, and I came to Canada last year to take a closer look at its educational system in regards to teaching English as an additional language (EAL) to students in primary and middle schools. I came up with this idea four years ago after I read in the newspaper about the growing number of immigrants that had entered Chile from non-Spanish speaking countries. I immediately thought of the children who would be enrolled in our classrooms with no idea of what their teachers and their classmates were talking about. I wondered about those parents trying to understand our educational system and struggling to support their children with all that it means to move from one country to another and adapt to new customs without knowing the language of the new land. Many questions came to my mind but only one answer was absolutely true at that point: we were not prepared to teach those children.

The following year, I received in my class a student from the United States of America who spoke little Spanish. When I interviewed his parents, they told me that he had failed the previous year in another school. They told me that the teachers were not supportive, did not like him to take notes in English, and did not take into account the differences in cultural aspects so sometimes the teachers thought their son was being rude just

because in their culture they were used to being more straightforward when speaking than Chilean culture. Even though he struggled with reading in Spanish, teachers used the same instruments to teach and assess him in Science, History, and Spanish Language Arts. He was not allowed extra time to answer tests or read books in his mother tongue. In other words, the school did not make any provisions to help him; he was asked to adapt to the school rules, and his struggles were considered a lack of commitment, interest, and skills.

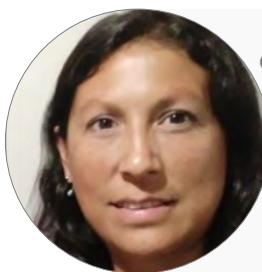
It made me sad to think about him failing Grade 5 just because our school system did not allow teachers to make adaptations that took his linguistic and cultural differences into consideration, and I promised his parents to do my best to provide him with a different experience in this new school. Without having any training in multi-cultural education, I followed my gut to implement a support plan. It was hard at the beginning since other teachers saw these actions as “privileges” that the rest of students did not have. I did not have the theoretical knowledge to debate them, but in the end I convinced them that we needed to support him. The plan included small things such as labelling the classroom with English and Spanish words, stating clear rules for behaviour with teachers and classmates, explaining the differences between the two cultures; allowing him to use his cell phone in class to look up words and translate texts, and providing extra time on tests. He was also sitting close to the teachers and to the board, and was assigned a buddy who supported him in Science and History. Even though these actions worked, I had the feeling that there must have been infinitely more things I could have done if the school had allowed me. At that point, I felt frustrated with the school system, and I was absolutely sure that we were not prepared to teach these children. It was urgent

[Continued on next page](#)

to change our views of newcomers and our teaching strategies if we really wanted to help these students thrive in the Chilean school system. We were not prepared to teach “non-Chilean students,” and in order to change that we needed to look outside our borders, travel abroad if possible, and bring new ideas to modify and improve our practices.

I investigated the possibilities and found out that Canada was known as a multicultural country that had managed to take an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse population into consideration as a natural process of globalization. Canadian educators had worked for many years to incorporate multicultural education and English language learning as part of the curriculum, and provincial governments had provided schools with official guidelines, instructional plans, and language standards for English language learners. Canada appeared to be a country that had already experienced an increase in students from linguistically diverse backgrounds, and as far as I could learn, had succeeded in supporting them in schools. I managed to convince my husband and came with our daughter to experience first-hand what it meant to be a newcomer and to peek into their schools to witness the teaching strategies teachers use with these students.

What I have learned about teaching English language learners is a topic for a whole new article. I can only say that it has been worth the trip, and it has been a great experience so far. Now I have the theoretical knowledge I lacked a few years ago, and I can share this knowledge with other teachers when I go back to my country. I would like to make educators in Chile realize that part of being a teacher includes questioning our practices and reflecting on them; that part of being a teacher is to be curious and to look for new ways to improve; that part of being a teacher is to search for better ways to support our students, in spite of what school protocols say; and that part of being a teacher is to not stop pushing boundaries



Claudia Marroquin has been an EAL teacher in Chile for more than 15 years. She is interested in additional language teaching and learning, and she is currently a MA student in the University of British Columbia's Okanagan School of Education.



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Exploring Tutors' Work with EAL Students in a Writing Centre

by Maya Pilin



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ACCORDING to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2018), Canada is considered one of the top five countries for higher education by international students. The latest statistics note that there is a total of 494,525 international students holding a valid study permit in Canada as of 2017. British Columbia ranks second in the country, after Ontario, as a destination, with 24% of Canada's study permits (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2018). In fact, enrollment in B.C.'s post-secondary system has almost tripled over the past ten years (Heslop, 2018). As international students predominantly originate from countries where English is not the primary language, English as an Additional Language (EAL) services have become integral to British Columbia's universities. For example, writing centres are a resource to which EAL students can turn for assistance with writing assignments. However, tutoring sessions with EAL students may differ from other tutoring sessions in a variety of ways, including the teaching style (Thonus, 2004), communication styles (Moser,

1993), and students' concerns (Winder, Kathpalia, & Koo, 2014). Despite these differences, few studies have examined the unique aspects of tutoring sessions with EAL students from the tutors' perspective. The goal of the current study was to determine students' expectations and tutors' identified competencies and challenges in working with EAL students.

The Study

The current qualitative study included a sample of 12 undergraduate and graduate writing tutors at a research-intensive public university in Western Canada. The tutors worked at a writing centre whose goal was to help both EAL and non-EAL students improve their writing skills by clarifying arguments, grammar, and teaching proofreading strategies. Tutors completed an online questionnaire designed by the research team. After questionnaires were completed, tutors' answers were coded by two researchers, working alone first and then in collaboration. Data were examined for units of meaning as well as emerging themes.

The Findings

Unique Aspects of Tutoring EAL Students

Differences between tutoring students using EAL and other students visiting the writing centre arose in terms of the session focus, communication styles, and teaching pace. The most common was the focus of the tutoring session. The majority of advisors noted that the session focus with EAL students would predominantly be on grammar as opposed to other topics. Aptly summarizing the differences, one advisor wrote: "With English speakers, I critique the structure of their papers and the evidence they provide. Often I don't have time to get this far with EAL students; we get stuck on the small stuff."

Advisors also noted that often the communication style would differ in appointments with students using EAL. One advisor stated "I may slow down when talking and try not to use many idioms or slang words...." Furthermore, the pace of the appointment itself would also slow down to accommodate the students, with one advisor writing "I do find myself working slower and more carefully with EAL students. I want to make sure we are working/learning together."

Student Expectations

Participants felt that students expected them to be editors, take a leading role, and provide expertise during a tutoring session. The predominant theme that emerged above all others in the participants' responses was related to editing. One advisor wrote: "[EAL students] often seem to have expectations that I'll correct their paper for grammatical mistakes myself and then give them back a corrected version." Many of the participants'

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responses that focused on students' expectations of advisors editing their work specified that the editing pertained specifically to grammatical errors. For example, one participant stated that students using EAL expect "micro-edits" in their appointment. Furthermore, several responses that hinged upon editing also hinted that students using EAL expected to be passive participants in the tutoring sessions, as opposed to active ones, with one advisor writing "[EAL students] expect me to 'fix' their paper for them, in the grammar sense."

Identified Competencies

Tutors generally felt competent explaining grammar, focusing on macro-level writing issues, and interacting with students, with prior experience playing a role in boosting tutors' confidence working with students. The most salient theme was related to helping with grammar. Advisors felt comfortable assisting EAL students with various aspects of grammar, such as article use, tenses, sentence structure, and parts of speech. For instance, one participant wrote "I feel confident with teaching 'how' to use different parts of speech. For example, I have taught different students the use of definite and indefinite articles (a, an, the), when and where to use them."

In addition to grammar, a large subset of advisors also felt comfortable teaching macro-level skills to students using EAL. For example, participants felt comfortable with teaching genre awareness, content, organization, and various aspects of the writing process. One advisor commented "Often, I find that tutoring earlier, during the planning process, results in a far more successful paper, regardless of grammar mistakes and surface levels problems." Notably, some advisors who mentioned their comfort levels in regard to either teaching grammar or macro-level skills noted that their ability and comfort in the process of teaching in general played an important role in their comfort level.

Experience seemed to play a role in boosting participants' comfort levels. For the advisors who felt comfortable and confident in tutoring sessions, prior experience played a large role in their comfort level. One tutor claimed, "I'm very confident, because I've been in their shoes, and I can show them some of the strategies that worked for me." Often, advisors who were empathetic towards students using EAL due to personal second-language experience also felt confident in their tutoring skills, with another tutor writing:

I'm very confident that I can tutor EAL students (given some training) because I speak multiple languages with noticeable differences, and I also understand how patterns and structures work for different languages, which means I can empathize with the EAL students and help them learn English from their perspective....

Identified Challenges

While some participants did report feeling confident explaining grammar to students, for the most part, the participants overwhelmingly felt that explaining grammatical concepts was the most challenging aspect that they encountered in tutoring sessions. It was also put forward that a lack of experience using an additional language might contribute to this challenge. Specifically, many advisors discussed struggling with explaining concepts that they understand intuitively as first-language English speakers. One advisor said "sometimes it's hard for me to be very specific about why what someone has written is wrong. Reading it aloud, I can certainly tell when it sounds off and explain how to fix the issue. Actually explaining why though, can be very difficult." Several advisors noted that they "don't know" grammatical rules or would forget some of the rules. Moreover, one advisor mentioned finding it difficult to use the proper terminology to discuss grammatical concepts, stating that they find it challenging "explaining [grammar issues] using professional English technical language—e.g. oh, this is meant to be a 'past participle.'" A possible explanation for the discomfort and lack of confidence in explaining grammar might be related to a lack of experience. One participant noted "sometimes I don't feel that I'm clear enough with my explanations. Maybe I've never been in the opposite position, so it's hard for me to know when I'm being convoluted." Thus, both personal and prior professional experience played an important role in increasing advisors' confidence levels.

Discussion and Implications

All in all, tutoring sessions with EAL students differed in a variety of ways; students came in with specific expectations, particularly regarding grammar, and tutors experienced unique challenges. While tutors noted some difficulties in working with EAL students, including communication and managing expectations, several key factors emerged as potential predictors of tutor comfort, including tutors' own experience with languages other than English and tutors' ability to pace the appointments well.

However, potentially the most interesting finding of the study is that tutors reported feeling both comfortable with teaching grammar and experiencing challenges in teaching this aspect of English. This discrepancy may be related to "grammar" being a relatively vague term for a field that includes many concepts, including punctuation, sentence structure, and parts of speech. In fact, what seemed to emerge from tutors' answers was the idea that while tutors felt comfortable identifying errors in students' work, they were challenged by the pedagogical aspects of the appointment. Specifically, tutors struggled to explain the reasons behind grammatical errors to students. The discrepancy between tutors' comfort and discomfort with various aspects of grammar may prove to be a fruitful arena for further research.

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Importantly, the findings of the current study provide the basis for the development of evidence-based tutor training programs. As tutors have now identified their challenges in teaching EAL students, evidence-based training should capitalize on this information to develop tutors' competency in these areas of weakness. For example, training programs may focus on teaching tutors the vocabulary to discuss grammatical concepts with EAL students. Moreover, training programs should discuss the expectations with which EAL students may enter a tutoring session and how to properly manage these expectations. Finally, it may prove useful to have tutors with personal EAL or other additional language experience discuss students' potential strengths and challenges from their point of view.

Conclusion

In conclusion, tutors experience unique challenges in working with EAL students. Future studies should examine these challenges in more detail, particularly tutors' struggles associated with grammar. Furthermore, writing centre directors should consider incorporating training components that may help tutors struggling with some of these challenges into their tutor training sessions.

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Maya Pilin (@MayaPilin) is a PhD student in Psychological Science on the Okanagan campus of the University of British Columbia. She has worked as an English tutor for EAL students in Canada as well as for children in France throughout her post-secondary education.

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BC TEAL Lower Mainland Regional Conference Diary: November 16, 2019

by Ange Quapp

EARLY in the spring of 2019, during a PD Committee meeting, the topic of the regional conference arose. The question was posed whether anyone would be interested in chairing the conference. Knowing NOTHING of chairing a conference, yet eager to help and to rise to a challenge, I agreed to take on the role.

Together with Cathy Ebert, Cindi Jones, and Jaimie Evoy, we got right to work planning the event. After much discussion and exchange of emails, we had settled on the much-needed topic: *Beyond Burnout: Resiliency in EAL*. A couple of my work colleagues highly recommend Dian Henderson, a senior lecturer and ESL Department Chair at Thompson Rivers University, to speak on the topic. An email was sent, and the theme was launched.

Finally, after 7.5 months of planning, almost 90 smiling faces appeared on the campus of LaSalle College early Saturday morning, where the BC TEAL Lower Mainland Regional Conference was being hosted. Together with Languages Across Borders, LaSalle College graciously gave us space to participate in workshops, presentations, and the plenary talk by Dian Henderson.

It was a very exhilarating day for me, yet nerve-racking at the same time. I was excited to see the conference finally come to fruition but was nervous about whether everything would run smoothly.

The topic of burnout was chosen, as it is seemingly a common concern for many teachers and students alike. How can students continue to study hard when faced with the challenges and stresses of daily life, and how can we continue to be effective teachers with all that can weigh us down? Dian

Henderson eloquently addressed this topic with a good mix of sincerity and light-heartedness. She encouraged us with her



Dian Henderson, plenary speaker



Dian's plenary session

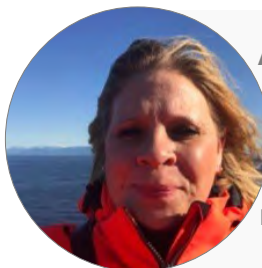


Engaged conference participants

stories and experiences and urged us to lean into the discomfort of not knowing and to strive towards curiosity. Using her son's soccer team experiences, she helped us understand that we need to work together as a team. Dian left us with four key takeaway points: lead a meaningful life, serve others, practice forgiveness, and find light and laughter so that you can be what you desire.

Throughout the rest of the day, participants were able to attend a variety of workshops and presentations related to the theme, such as "Full-Body and Voice Burnout Prevention Warm Up," "Expectations? A Stress Recipe. You Need an Assertive Diet," and "Building Capacity and Preventing Burnout through Self-Compassion, Empathy, and Kindness." There was also a round table that allowed attendees to dive deeper in discussion with Dian about "The Heart of Resilience."

As always, participants left with full hearts and minds having had a day to network, share, and learn something new, and I left feeling grateful for having had the opportunity to be in a different role and thankful for all that I learned along the way. When can we start planning the next conference?



Ange Quapp has taught EAL for over 20 years. She instructs at University Canada West, New York Institute of Technology, and Trinity Western University. Her research interests are in Coaching for Metacognition. She currently serves as a member of the BC TEAL PD committee.

Your Companion for Learning English as an Additional Language

by Guy Corriveau



"A book to grow into and not out of."
—Eaglesmoon

ACCORDING to the Linguistic Society of America, there are 7,097 distinct languages used across 195 countries in a world inhabited by 7.5 billion people. As of 2016, Chinese is the most spoken language in the world, with over 1.2 billion native speakers. Next, is Spanish at almost 400 million native speakers.

The English language is spoken as a native language by only 360 million people, but when you include those that speak it as an additional language the number soars to 1.5 billion! The numbers dramatically show that there are more non-native English speakers than native English speakers. It's even been said that the remaining 6 billion want to learn English.

It's not surprising then that students from all over the planet are studying English as an additional language in their home countries, and often moving to Commonwealth (or former Commonwealth) countries, the United States, or Canada to improve their fluency. Many of these students have hopes to be accepted into internationally recognized universities and/or employment areas such as diplomacy, finance, commerce, transportation, health, information management, technology, and entertainment—each one dominated by the English language. An internet search using *English language learning material* points to 276 million results. Of course, it's a less daunting experience to visit a bookstore language section. But it's almost as overwhelming.

Your Companion for Learning English as an Additional Language is a 236-page textbook that sets itself apart from the others. It is mindful that English language learners do not have the benefit of growing up in an English language environment (or culture)

with constant exposure to spoken and written English. Rather, many learners receive a limited number of English language classes per week, returning home to their native language activities and cultural life.

The book recognizes that non-native English language learners are, in the majority, consumed in betterment training after hours, including private English language instruction; that, in general, they lack access to English language media, entertainment, and friendships; and that, unarguably, they cannot learn the way native English speakers do—*by osmosis*.

Your Companion for Learning English as an Additional Language provides an alternative to other learning materials which can often seem cold, uninviting, and which sometimes seem to make an assumption that non-native speakers understand the material's explanations, instructions, and examples.

Your Companion for Learning English as an Additional Language is written in the second person in a narrative and more casual form. It begins with a quick look at the development and evolution of English from its birth less than 2,000 years ago to the present time. It then describes the very basics of the English language while helping the learner understand the components of words, including sounds. Next, it expands these basics by introducing the concept of words, syllables, prefixes, infixes, suffixes, and even takes a look at “-nyms.”

Continuing in a stepwise approach, the building blocks of sentence construction are named and explained; all about sentences, phrases, and clauses is discussed; and the use of punctuation is detailed and clarified. After that, of course, the text gives a purpose to the learnings so far by examining the paragraph and preparing the learner to write a final copy of one.

Because *Your Companion for Learning English as an Additional Language* is written with an understanding of the learner's motivation and need to get longer written assignments handed in; to meet teachers' expectations; and to get top grades, tying paragraphs together into stories, compositions, essays, and reports is then explained.

Finally, the importance of reading, listening, and speaking is discussed and followed by some suggestions as to how exposure to the language can and should be optimized.

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Your Companion for Learning English as an Additional Language *continued*

The book, which is a compendium of my lessons and an appended collection of English language reference knowledge, is inspired by the successes of the students I've had the privilege of teaching over the years. It's a veritable delight for me to witness them learning and excelling in the acquisition of their new language. They invariably show rapid progress and improvement in English reading, speaking, writing, and understanding, and in the main, quickly meet English as an additional language requirements and join their fellow students in regular English classes. Some of them are now studying at the universities of their choice in Canada and in the United States.

The book's motivation is to share what students should know about the English language to successfully complete their scholastic requirements and to prepare them for higher education conducted in English (short of the contents and detail of a *Style Manual*). Its main intent is to be a trusted friend to students through their English language learning journey. Its aim is learner-centred. Its hope is to be helpful and to continue to be helpful wherever the learner may go.

This book review is published here for your consideration, in response to its reviewers who each mentioned, in their endorsements, a characteristic of the book I had overlooked. Namely, "it's an insightful read for linguists and a handy companion for English students *and teachers alike*" and "[it] should quickly become the 'go-to' text for not only students *but also teachers*...."

Your Companion for Learning English as an Additional Language can be purchased in paperback from amazon.com. The book is also available through the Vancouver Public Library.



Guy Corriveau, BSc, MPA is an EAL teacher with over 4,500 hours of one-on-one teaching experience. During his 22-year career in the Canadian Army and long service to federal, provincial, and municipal governments he enjoyed teaching and training adult and young learners. In 2013, he followed in his Dad's footsteps and graduated from a teaching English as a second language program in 2014 with a nationally-recognized TESL certificate.

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Enriching Language Learning with Authentic Local Interactions

by Yukie Ueda



Japanese students photo by mariamichelle from Pixabay

THIS SUMMER, I had a chance to participate in a university course to learn about additional language acquisition. Throughout the course, the question of what makes language learning effective repeatedly arose, making me stop to look back on my own experiences. Reflecting on my history of learning English and Danish as a student, and also my history supporting international students as a student counselor in Japan, what came up in my mind as a key component in language learning was the involvement in local communities through interactions and cultural experiences. These interactions and experiences seem to speak not only for me but the majority of students who I've met. Many students often find their learning further enriched when they have more interactions with local people through various activities. This interaction also promotes inter-cultural understanding, which is typically one of the reasons people learn a language. So here, I would like to introduce my story of learning languages through local experiences as well as the various activities which have helped international students I've worked with in the past.

I started studying English at the age of 13 at a junior high school just like other Japanese kids. The English class was delivered in a traditional lecture style, focusing mostly on grammar and reading

comprehension. I enjoyed the class, and without any other chance to study English outside the classroom, I thought this was the way people learned a new language. This view was completely broken when I went to Denmark as an exchange student during high school and participated in English classes in the local school. Once, I was given 10 pages of an article

discussing the topic of genetic engineering. I had never read that long of an article before, so it took me a whole night just to look up new vocabulary and manage to grasp the gist. During class, I was proud of myself having read the whole article, waiting for my teacher to ask me about the grammar used in the article. Finally, I was picked, but then the



Copenhagen photo by faverzani from Pixabay

teacher asked me to present my opinion about genetic engineering. I froze. Not only because of my English limit, but also because I had never thought about giving my opinion. For a long time, understanding the grammar and story had been the final purpose in the English classes I had attended. While I struggled in producing a word, my classmates started an active discussion. It was a shocking experience, but at the same time, a transformative moment for me, giving me a real drive to learn the

language and communicate my ideas with others over the barriers.

During my time in Denmark, I was given many opportunities to get to know the community and its people. There were locally organized events every two months, meeting local people and other exchange students from different countries, sharing food, playing games, and watching movies. Most exchange students, including myself, knew only a few words in Danish when we arrived, so when we saw each other at these events, we always checked out who had improved their Danish the best. There was an idea among exchange students that all of us would improve our Danish dramatically over the Christmas holiday. This belief was because each student spent most of their time with their host

family and friends, preparing for Christmas together and joining in parties. In fact, I had no time to stay in my room alone, and I was always out either in the kitchen or living room, learning how to cook roast duck and Christmas sweets, preparing mulled wine, and making handcrafted Christmas decorations, which I had never experienced in my home country. These

experiences were the cornerstone of my time in Denmark. I felt my Danish was improving day by day. Moreover, as I started to have more common things to do and talk about, I finally felt I was speaking the same language as my family and friends, becoming a part of them.

After graduating from university, I started working as a coordinator at a worldwide non-profit organization which promoted international exchange

Continued on next page

programs for high school students. Some distinctive characteristics of the organization were that the programs were designed to promote intercultural understanding among youth, and local volunteer-staff played extremely active roles in organizing cultural learning activities. For example, they organized cooking clubs to show students how to cook sushi, and in exchange, learned about the students' home food. The students also celebrated traditional seasonal events such as Japanese New Year, rice-cake making, and calligraphy together with local kids. Some students visited a ramen noodle museum or joined a ninja tour to learn about local industries, and others experienced a Japanese tea ceremony with traditional confectionery that they had made. Similarly, when I was working in a team at another job at a university that organized study programs for students from the United States, various field trips and activities were merged with Japanese language classes, offering students opportunities to learn about Japanese culture, history, and traditions. The students visited a Noh theatre (Japan's oldest form of theatre), played traditional musical instruments, and also visited temples to experience Zen culture by participating in meditation and other cultural activities.

Throughout my work in the education sector, I have received a lot of feedback from both Japanese students studying abroad

and international students visiting Japan, saying that those experiences helped them understand the places they visited and local people in breadth and depth. Especially, participating in those activities together with local people enabled them to



Tea Ceremony photo by rawpixel from freepik.com

gain different perspectives on the place, often changing the stereotypical ideas they had before. Students also gained a stronger sense of belongingness to the community as they had more authentic interactions with locals, which further promoted their integrative motivations to acquire the language. Observing those students, language development seemed to be inseparable from sharing common experiences and

knowledge and for gaining deeper cultural understandings. The reason for additional language learning must differ from one person to another and everybody has different preferences about how they learn. However, I cannot overemphasize the values and pleasure that authentic interactions and cultural understanding can bring to learning an additional language.



Yukie Ueda, after graduating from the University of Victoria, spent over four years in Japan and one year in New Zealand helping international students in their adaptation processes and additional language learning. She moved to Canada in 2018 to start a company with her husband to provide language and cultural learning programs for Japanese students.

Call for Submissions TEAL News

TEAL News is the platform for BC TEAL members to share their work, ideas, and innovations with a wide readership. The main goal of this publication is to shine a spotlight on work done by and for the teachers of English as an Additional Language in British Columbia. Latest issues are distributed to institutions across the province, online through **BC TEAL's website**, and selected articles are shared through BC TEAL's Blog and on social media.

TEAL News invites submissions for the Spring 2020 issue. Newsletter articles are usually 500-1000 words in length. The deadline for submissions to the next issue of *TEAL News* is February 1, 2020. Please contact the editor at **editor@bctea.org** with your submission ideas.

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BC TEAL Journal

The *BC TEAL Journal* is the peer-reviewed scholarly publication of BC TEAL. It exists to promote scholarship related to the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language in British Columbia, with articles explicitly reflecting the various contexts and settings of the BC TEAL membership. The journal is freely available as an open access publication, and BC TEAL members are encouraged to register as reviewers, authors, and readers on the journal website.

The *BC TEAL Journal* invites the submission of original previously unpublished contributions, such as research articles or theoretical analysis, classroom practice, and opinion essays, from all sectors and experience levels represented by the BC TEAL membership. Research type articles are generally no more than 8,000 words plus references. Theoretical analysis, classroom practice, and opinion essays are generally no more than 4,000 words plus references. Manuscripts are accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year, with papers that have completed the review and editing process being published as they are ready. Articles are gathered into a single issue over the course of one calendar year.

For information on the submission process, refer to the **BC TEAL Journal website** (ojs-o.library.ubc.ca/index.php/BCTJ).

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